



NEWSLETTER: NOVEMBER 2011

September meeting: Patrick-Jean Guay, Victoria University Research Fellow “*The Mallard X Pacific Black Duck Hybridisation Threat*”

Patrick spoke first on other hybridizations in wildlife, such as dingoes x wild domestic dogs; introduced and wild trout in the USA; the US Ruddy Duck, introduced to the UK, then self introducing to Spain, where it hybridized with the local white headed duck; and *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*, which hybridizes with local Grevilleas wherever it is planted.

Why does this matter? The result of these hybrids are a loss of biodiversity, with the loss of unique local species, and the resulting hybrids have a tendency to invasiveness and pest status. For example, *Banksia marginata* has shrub and tree forms, depending on habitat – hybrids take over both habitats, losing the 2 distinct forms. *Acacia longifolia* has 2 sub species – *sophorae* near the sea, *longifolia* ssp inland. Hybrids of both have great vigour and dominate both habitats, out-competing other indigenous plants.

Hybrids of waterfowl are common, many occur in the wild, and many are fertile (as cf. Mules, crosses between horses and donkeys, which are always sterile). Mallard ducks (*Anas platyrhynchos*), native to the USA, are the main culprit – there are recorded crosses between Mallards and 40 other species of ducks in the wild, a further 20 in captivity, and 17 of these are fertile. Historically Mallards lived in the Western half of the USA on the prairie, and Black duck in the forests of the Eastern side. With white settlement the forests were cleared, Mallards invaded the new cleared spaces which suited

them, and black ducks have been overwhelmed. There is debate about whether there are any pure American black duck left, or whether they are all hybrids now.

In New Zealand, Mallards were introduced in the mid 1800s, the first hybrid was recorded in 1917, and by the 1980s there were fewer than 5% genetically pure black ducks. Mallards self introduced to Macquarie Island, and there are no pure black ducks left there now.

In Australia Mallards were introduced in the late 1800s. Wild Mallards are rare, only being found around the SE and SW coast. However urban ponds are acting as a gene pool, where they breed with local Pacific black duck and domestic ducks (former pets dumped by owners). Mallards are able to out-compete male Pacific Black Duck because they are dominant, and breed earlier in the season than PBD, leaving the unsuccessful Mallard males to attack the female PBD.

To prevent a repeat of the NZ experience, with the loss of pure Pacific Black Duck, strategies would need to be implemented. Domestic and Mallard ducks would need to be removed from urban ponds (a difficult public relations exercise), and monitoring carried out to watch out for self introductions of Mallards from New Zealand and Lord Howe Island.

Patrick brought along two taxidermied specimens – a pure Pacific Black Duck, and a hybrid, which was pale brown and had less distinctive markings, which illustrated the result of unchecked hybridization. - **Judy Smart**

Field Trip: Pt Nepean (Morrington Peninsula National Park)

For our September excursion we visited Pt Nepean to see some of the newly opened sections at the northern end of the park. We were met by Victor Teoh, Head Ranger, who took us on a short walk into an area still closed to public access that has been added to the park under the transfer from Federal to State Government control. Victor detailed the extensive work that has been carried out over the last few years to remove unexploded ordnance left over from the previous use by the military, as well as revegetation.

Victor explained the methods used in this process: firstly the dominant Coastal Tea-tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*) was pushed down prior to burning. The objectives of the burning were firstly to facilitate the detection of the unexploded mortars, grenades etc, and secondly to kill of the seed bank of weed species in the soil. About 100 potentially dangerous items were removed, together with a large volume of associated material which, although not presenting a real danger, is difficult to the untrained eye to identify as such. Victor showed us a series of photographs showing the transition from ash bed to flourishing vegetation community.

The major regenerating species was Wirilda (*Acacia retinoides*), which thickly covers the slopes and higher ground, and is regarded as of local significance; also flourishing was the Rare Bitter-bush (*Adriana quadripartita*). Lower ground tended to be support communities of sedges (*Lepidosperma* sp) and grasses (e.g. *Poa* sp), while in flower were Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*), Swainson Pea (*Swainsona lessertiifolia*), *Hibbertia* sp, and Coast Beard-heath (*Leucopogon parviflorum*).

Work is ongoing to remove significant weed species including Purple Polygale (*Polygala myrtifolia*), Boneseed (*Chransantheum monilifera*) and Boxtorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*).

Fauna known to occupy the area includes the Southern Long-nosed bandicoot (*Perameles*

nasuta), White-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis leucopus*), and the Black or Swamp Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*). Also spotted was a Jacky Lizard (*Amphibolurus muricatus*).



Photo: Lee Denis

Following Victor's talk, and after lunch at the Quarantine Station, we walked some of the newly opened tracks (Wilson's Folly and Range tracks), keeping an eye out as usual for birds, plants and anything else of interest. - Lee Denis

Bird List For Pt Nepean 17 September 2011	
Australian White Ibis	Straw-necked Ibis
Black-shouldered Kite	Nankeen Kestrel
Masked Lapwing	Pacific Gull
Silver Gull	Galah
Little Corella	Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Brown Thornbill	Red Wattlebird
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Eastern Yellow Robin	Grey Fantail
Olive-backed Oriole	Australian Magpie
Little Raven	Welcome Swallow
Silvereye	Common Blackbird

October Meeting & Excursion: Robin Drury, FNCV Fauna Survey Group on Frogs of the Mornington Peninsula

There are 11 frog species listed as occurring on the Mornington Peninsula. Robin took us through the distinguishing features of each species, including appearance (not a very reliable guide, because it is extremely variable) and call. Robin has devised his own descriptions of frog calls which include such descriptions as 'Tock: two stones struck together' (Spotted Marsh Frog). As he played his recordings of frogs we were likely to hear on the Peninsula we could make the associations.

Robin also gave us some general information about frogs, their physiology, lifestyle and habits, as well as some stories from his frog-hunting experiences.

As a follow-up to his talk Robin kindly agreed to accompany us on a field trip to Langwarrin Fauna & Flora Reserve on the following Saturday evening. There we were able to try out our newly-acquired call recognition. Most of us were well aware of the 'bonk!' call of the Pobblebonk or Banjo Frog, but it was a revelation to listen to

familiar evening bush sounds and find out their source – the trill of the Brown Tree Frog and the clicking of the Common Froglet being two commonly heard.

At Langwarrin FFR we visited three sites, including a pond (puddle?) beside McLelland Drive, the reservoir, and a small wetland. Robin identified the frogs heard at these sites – in all five species were identified as listed below.

Langwarrin Reservoir (site 1)

- Brown Tree Frog (*Litoria ewingii*)
- Verreaux's or Whistling Tree Frog (*Litoria verreauxii verreauxii*)
- Striped Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes peroni*)

Langwarrin wetland (site 2)

- Common Froglet (*Crinia signifera*),
- Whistling Tree Frog in background

Langwarrin Roadside pond (site 3)

- Pobblebonk or Banjo Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilli*)
- Striped Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes peroni*)

These recordings can be found on our website

November meeting: Geoff Durham, 50 year member Vic National Parks Association, “VNPA – a history of success”

Geoff started by telling us about how he became interested in the environment, by listening to Crosbie Morrison on the radio, and through the Scouts at Bacchus Marsh where he grew up. The VNPA started August 1952, when Ros Garnet of the FNCV called a meeting of interested groups to form a new lobby group. Their first action was to lobby for a National Parks Act.

At the time the 12 Parks were run by Committees of Management and had to be self supporting by cattle grazing and other activities, so the next campaign was for a National Parks Service to employ rangers to manage NPs. In 1971 the Little Desert was to be subdivided for farming, so a big

public outcry led to a Public Review of Public Land, which led to the formation of the Land Conservation Council, which was VNPA’s main focus. Through the LCC’s research and advice, and VNPA’s lobbying and research (VNPA volunteers and staff conducted 3 major Public Reviews) there are now 45 National Parks, 3 Wilderness Parks, 13 State Marine Parks, and 11 Marine Sanctuaries.

Another major focus of the VNPA was publications. A best seller was *The Alps at the Crossroads*, which resulted in a much larger Alpine NP than originally planned. Other publications included the *In Flower* series, for different regions, the *Discovering the Prom* (and other regions) series, the Box Ironbark campaign books, the *Wyperfeld Guide*, now available on the VNPA website, as well as magazines. The latest

publication is *Life on the Rocky Shores*, a guide to rockpooling and beachcombing.

The Friends of Reserves, National Parks etc, were started through the VNPA, then hived off to become autonomous.

The activities of the VNPA include excursions every month, a bushwalking program, the Walk Talk and Gawk program, plus the VNPA continues to campaign. Current issues are: cattle grazing in the High Country, the 5% across the board burning prescription for Parks, which is destructive and not effective for fire prevention,

the Red Gum forests, and the management and maintenance of National Parks, with Parks Victoria being grossly underfunded.

Geoff joined the VNPA only 2 years after it started, and was on the Council from 1974 to 2000. He was President from 1978 to 1981, plus committee work. He was a member of the National Parks Advisory Council 1983 to 2000, and involved in the formation of the Friends Groups. He is the author of *Wyperfeld: Australia's First Mallee National Park*, published in 2001. - **Judy Smart**

SEANA CAMPOUT: PHILIP ISLAND

Seven PFNC members attended the SEANA Spring campout over the Melbourne Cup weekend, organised by FNCV at Phillip Island. Activities participated in included birdwatching at many locations including Rhyll, Swan Lake Churchill Island; a walk around Woolami with ranger Graeme Burgin detailing the revegetation that has been carried out there; beachcombing at Cowrie Beach; frogging at Swan Lake; and trips further afield to Wonthaggi, French Island and Inverloch.

Frogs Versus Short-tailed Shearwaters (Muttonbirds)

One of the many excursions arranged was Frogging and Spotlighting at Swan Lake led by Robin Drury. Interested people assembled at 7.15 pm, car pooled and drove to the car park at Swan Lake to meet with Robin. The night was cool and dark, with threatening rain.

We walked, armed with torches, to the Mutton Bird Rookeries at Summerland Bay. We stopped at two bird hides accessed by a long board walk. As Robin pointed out various frog calls, the Shearwaters flew in, creating a swirling, crescendo screeching mass of birds as they searched for their burrows and mates. The noise was terrific, drowning out the frog calls. It was a wonderful experience to see the shearwaters so close, some landing near our feet, some flying so close over our heads. By torch light, we could see them entering their burrows. The Short-tailed Shearwaters arrive at South Eastern Australia in October to breed, then migrate to the North

Pacific in April.

Also, we disturbed Welcome Swallows that were nesting in the bird hide. On our walk back to the car park, we spotlighted Ring-tailed Possums. It was a great excursion. - **Pat Gomm.**



Photo: Lee Denis

Swan Lake Revisited

A second visit during daylight hours yielded no frogs or shearwaters but plenty of birds, including

Musk Duck and White-necked Heron

Bird List Swan Lake 3 Nov 2011	
Musk Duck 2 pairs	Royal Spoonbill
Black Swan	Purple Swamphen
Pacific Black Duck	Dusky Moorhen
Chestnut Teal	Eurasian Coot
Hardhead	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Hoary-headed Grebe	Superb Fairy-wren

Little Pied Cormorant	Red Wattlebird
Little Black Cormorant	New Holland Honeyeater
White-faced Heron	Grey Shrike-thrush
White-necked Heron	Grey Fantail
Great Egret	Grey Currawong
Australian White Ibis	Welcome Swallow
	Silvereye

November Excursion: Brisbane Ranges

This months excursion took us a bit further afield than normal. Altogether 11 members travelled to the Brisbane Ranges, most on the Community Bus. We had sought some advice from the local Friends group beforehand and had some target areas primarily looking for orchids, as well as birds, flowers and anything else that caught our interest. We were only able to visit three different locations, so that this trip was almost a reconnoitre for future reference. We did manage however to find a number of orchids and birds, as well as enjoying the wildflowers.

First stop was Butchers Rd where we found Flying Duck orchids (*Caleana major*). Shining Bronze-cuckoo was heard but not seen; Rufous Whistlers were seen, as well as Scarlet Robin. Flowers included the endemic Golden Grevillea



Photo: Lee Denis

G. chrysophaea, (only found at Brisbane Ranges and Gippsland)

Also In Flower

*White everlastings - *Argentipallium obtusifolium*

*White everlasting - *Chrysocephalum baxteri*
 Yellow everlasting - *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*
 Yellow everlasting - *Helichrysum scorpioides*
 Blue pincushions - *Brunonia australis*
 Bluebells - *Wahlenbergia* species
 Chocolate lilies - *Arthropodium strictum*
 Milkmaids - *Burchardia umbellata*
 Fringe lily - *Thysanotus tuberosus*
 Blue spike milk wort - *Comesperma calymega*
 Dianella - *Dianella revoluta*
 Trigger plants - *Stylidium graminifolium*
 Creamy candles - *Stackhousia monogyna*
 Brachycombe daisy - *Brachycombe multifida*
Acacia myrtifolia - finished flowering
 **Acacia mitchelli* - in bud
Leptospermum continentale - prickly
Leptospermum myrsinoides - pink flowering
 **Hibbertia riparia*
Goodenia geniculata
 * Wedge pea - *Gompholobium huegeli*
 *Golden grevillea- *Grevillea chrysophaea*
Lomatia ilicifolia
 Rice flowers - small - *Pimelea humilis*
 Rice flowers - nodding - *Pimelea octophylla*
 Pea flowers - *Platylobium obtusangulum*
 *Orange pea flower- *Pultenea humilis*
Dillwynia species
 Dusty miller - *Spyridium parvifolium*
 Also Lots of other pea flowers I couldn't identify!

* Plants we don't see on the Mornington Peninsula

We were warned that we had missed the peak of the flowers for the Brisbane Ranges, but what we saw was beautiful and spectacular, so we weren't disappointed. A place we have to come back to, and we only saw a corner of the Ranges too. -
Judy Smart & Lee Denis

Bird List Brisbane Ranges November 12, 2011	
Australian Wood Duck	Brown Thornbill
White-necked Heron	Red Wattlebird
Yellow billed spoonbill	White-eared Honeyeater
Nankeen Kestrel	White-naped Honeyeater
Common Bronzewing	New Holland Honeyeater
Galah	Eastern Spinebill
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Scarlet Robin

Crimson Rosella	Eastern Spinebill
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Scarlet Robin
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	Golden Whistler
Laughing Kookaburra	Rufous Whistler
Sacred Kingfisher	Magpie-Lark
Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Fantail
Spotted Pardalote	Australian Magpie
White-browed Scrubwren	

Birdwatching Group

November birding was at Coolart wetland. It was good to see plenty of water again, with the Ibis breeding in the wetland and waterbirds generally plentiful. A total of 58 species was reached, with some standouts being Nankeen Night Heron, Australasian Shoveller, Sacred Kingfisher and Tawny Frogmouth. Clamorous Reed-warblers were easily seen over the water; Little Grassbirds could be heard but, as usual, not seen. A group of Tawny Frogmouths near the entrance attracted a lot of attention and were much photographed.

We also managed to spot a Koala.



Photo: Yvonne Incigneri

Bird List For Coolart 7 November 2011				
Pacific Black Duck	Australasian Shoveler	Grey Teal	Chestnut Teal	Hardhead
Australasian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe	Little Pied Cormorant	Pied Cormorant	Little Black Cormorant
White-faced Heron	White-necked Heron	Intermediate Egret	Nankeen Night Heron	Australian White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis	Swamp Harrier	Purple Swampphen	Dusky Moorhen	Eurasian Coot
Masked Lapwing	Pacific Gull	Silver Gull	Rock Dove	Spotted Turtle-Dove
Common Bronzewing	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Galah	Eastern Rosella	Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
Tawny Frogmouth	Laughing Kookaburra	Sacred Kingfisher	Superb Fairy-wren	Spotted Pardalote
White-browed Scrubwren	Brown Thornbill	Red Wattlebird	Little Wattlebird	Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Rufous Whistler	Grey Shrike-thrush	Magpie-Lark	Grey Fantail	Willie Wagtail

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	Grey Butcherbird	Australian Magpie	Grey Currawong	Little Raven
Red-browed Finch	Welcome Swallow	Clamorous Reed-Warbler	Little Grassbird	Silvereye
Common Blackbird	Common Starling	Common Myna		

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events can be found at the website.

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip the following Saturday. Further information and current Programme of Events can be found at our website.

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